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PSYCHIC BOOKS

Messages From the Invisible

THE EARTHEN VESSEL. By Pamela Glendon. With an introduction by Sir Oliver Lodge. John Lane Company.

THE VERDICT. — A study of the probable origin of certain psychic phenomena together with a record of striking personal experiences. By Tertium Quid. With a preface by Miss H. A. Dallas. E. P. Dutton & Co.

After the death of F. W. H. Myers, president of the English Society for Psychical Research, twenty years ago, a number of new evidential devices in the transmission of psychic messages from the other world began to be employed, supposedly initiated by Myers himself, and designed to reduce the number of alternative explanations, such as coincidence, cosmic mind, and especially telepathy, as necessary elements in explaining the phenomena.

A first success in this more elaborate evidential direction was the system of cross-correspondence. This was the obtaining of similar or corresponding messages almost simultaneously through three or four different mediums, unacquainted with each other and often ignorant of the meaning of the messages they were transmitting. They were usually instructed by the communicators to send any unintelligible script to the central office of the Society for Psychical Research in London, where an investigator, whose duty it was to collate and interpret these disjointed fragments, often found that the stray bits joined together gave evidence of unmistakable coherence and significant interpretation. This ingenious and cautious system has resulted in some wonderful psychic "finds" in the other world, so to speak.

Later a still more interesting and conclusive means of communication was employed, and is now the most generally accepted and widely used of all methods of corroboration in seeking to prove the authenticity of messages from the other side. This is known as the Book-Test, and its method is most ingenious. The message comes in such a form that it is unintelligible to everybody, including the receiver, until it has, so to speak, been decoded through a book specified by the sender of the message.

Thus "A," in the other world, sends through the medium directions to find a certain page (number usually accurately given) in a certain book indicated only by its numbered place on a given shelf in a bookcase whose position is described, in a house to which the medium has no access, but usually well known to the receiver of the message. On this page of the book is to be found a passage, often fairly well outlined by the communicator, containing the message he wishes to get over.

Here, of course, is room for the play of imagination in the mind of the recipient, room also for chance coincidence to operate, and for possible clairvoyance on the part of the medium. And yet, so frequently all these agencies can be confidently eliminated as to leave a residue not to be explained by any theory in the domain of psychology as it is now explored, unless one accepts that of authentic spirit communication. This is what is frankly done in a new book called "The Earthen Vessel," by Pamela Glendon.

Lady Glendon is one of the beautiful Wyndham sisters who married Edward Lord Tennant, the brother of Margot Asquith, and the messages, all of them "book-tests," which are recorded in this volume, are mainly from their son, Edward Wyndham Tennant (known in the family as Bim), who was killed in the war. "They came through a noted medium, Mrs. Leonard, who is to the English Society for Psychical Research what Mrs. Piper was so long to the American branch.

Bear in mind that Mrs. Leonard speaks even in her trance, not as herself but as the medium through which "a control" from the "spirit world," to use their own phraseology, speaks. This control is known as "Feda," and "Feda" speaks for "Bim" in the other world, using Mrs. Leonard as a kind of telephone, just as an obliging "operator" on "long distance" might try to help a person who was trying to get a message through on an imperfect wire.

We quote at random from the volume before us. "Feda: 'Now, he (Bim) says "for the book-tests. He has two, both for his mother, and a third that he would like taken as a message to all of them. He can't get this through very well, but he repeats, it is a message for a good many people he knows. The first one is among some books near stairs—one in the left hand side of some stairs."

"Now if Feda had said 'steps' instead of 'stairs' we should have understood instantly. As it was, we who were listening and taking down the notes were entirely bewildered. One of us said, 'There are no bookshelves on the stairs. What can it mean?' Feda answered: 'Bim says that room that isn't used now, you know, with stairs in it. Then we recognized my room upstairs that, owing to the air raids, had been disused for some time. A small bookshelf hangs on the wall to the left of the entrance.

"Feda resumes. 'Now, then,' he says, 'that you have got the room, look for a book in a gray cover, one of the books in the row has a bit torn off its back; take the second book, counting from the left, and look on page 29. The words speak of the suffering and sacrifice in the war. It speaks of the war. Take it very literally, Bim says, or it will not be correct.'

"After the sitting we looked and found the second book on the shelf was one called "War Poems by X." On page 29 were some verses alluding to mothers and wives in the war."

The verses are too long to quote entire, but they start as follows: Oh, don't forget it, mother's son. They're soldiers, soldiers every one.

"Now the other message," Feda continued, "for his mother is in another book, the fourth book in the shelf above. Look on page 56." The quotation was as follows:

I think man's great capacity for pain Proves his immortal birthright, be ye sure No merely human mind could bear the strain.

Of the tremendous sorrow we endure, Unless our souls had root in soil divine We could not bear Earth's overwhelming strife; The fiercest pain that wracks this heart of mine Convinces me of Everlasting Life.

Interesting as are these "book-tests," there is in the appendix to the book a record of a test still more notable, one designed to eliminate the possibility of any subliminal memory on the part of the receiver, since the message sent was to be spelled out of the Times newspaper for the following day.

Up to the present these communications, dealing almost in futures, present a most baffling and inexplicable problem, and one quite unsolved by any theories now in vogue as to the subliminal memory.

"The Verdict" is anonymous, although the author's complete good faith and competence alike in giving and weighing testimony are vouched for by Miss H. A. Dallas, an Englishwoman who has devoted years to psychic research; her book called "Across the Barrier" is perhaps best known.

The writer of "The Verdict," who calls himself "Tertium Quid," is a lawyer who, though over legal age for military service, was active in the British army during the war, with the rank of captain—naturally in the capacity for which he was best fitted, in the courts martial. In a "foreword" he asks the public to believe that his reasons for anonymity "are not entirely personal and therefore not entirely selfish." His record is of a considerable number of extraordinary "manifestations" in psychic research.

Like many intelligent men he began with utter disbelief in a sort of "unwholesome" nonsense, but also passed through the usual phase of almost complete persuasion of the convincing nature of the evidence presented of communications to him from the "discarnate," in the terminology used first by Mr. Myers to signify a company of those who have died, and who yet have not perished in individuality or spirit, but are in another state of existence from which they look back with natural affection and interest to those whom they have known in this life.

His point of view is this: Either the discarnate do actually send back communications, or the definite and

clearly marked phenomena in which mediums' sittings have resulted are the result of telepathy, conscious or subconscious, or direct fraud of various kinds and degrees. As he says: "Two rivals dispute, with serious pretensions, to have originated these phenomena. The one is the World of Departed Spirits; the other is the World of Living Minds. A third makes voluble and not entirely unsupported claims." He wishes the public, "as fair and impartial men," to consider the verdict in the case of "Telepathy and Others vs. The Discarnate."

The author's conclusions on the subject of fraudulent mediums (apart from the obvious frauds who can deceive only the vulgar by commonplace means) are that it is harder to ascribe the results to fraud than to something else and something not understood. In a long chapter he goes into the subject of telepathy with much shrewdness, yet always his method is of scientific fairness; his whole book is perfectly satisfactory in this respect.

His most remarkable sitting was made with a Mrs. Leonard as medium, and resulted in receiving a message from some person whom he first thought to be his uncle, but afterward became convinced (through special circumstances) was his father. The message told him he would be going to a certain house within a short time where he would find a room with bookshelves in it—a room unfamiliar to him, but one "where he had a right to be," and described the relation of the shelves, windows, &c., with the furniture; to take a certain book from a certain shelf and read a certain page. Two more books were specified by place on shelf and by page. The significant parts of certain passages were quoted. Within a short time he called, quite fortuitously, at the house of an old friend of the days when he had been in active service in the army; this friend had told him that he (Tertium Quid) must make it his home whenever he was in the neighborhood—so it was "a place where he had the right to be."

He found the room, as described, though he had never seen it with the furniture and bookshelves as it was arranged at this time; he found the three separate books as described on the shelves, and the passages on the named pages were exactly as quoted by the medium. One of the books he had never heard of—didn't know of its existence. But it was upon a subject of Italian politics which had greatly interested the person who sent the message. All these things are formally presented and variously attested by several different persons. "There is a case," says Capt. —, "where telepathy could have had no standing.

Altogether an interesting contribution to a subject whose actual importance is scarcely open to question and in which investigation is proceeding among many different kinds of people, with their different minds.

HELEN AVERIL.

Beware of Crossed Astral Wires

THE PROBLEMS OF MEDIUMSHIP.

By Alessandro Zymonidas. E. P. Dutton & Co.

Whatever is a go-between. For instance, this is an age of transition. You can call any age an age of transition, as it necessarily exists between the age that preceded it, and the age that follows. Everything thus exists as a medium. Before and After are a sandwich in which the Present is the mustard.

Between This Life and the One Beyond

DEATH: ITS CAUSES AND PHENOMENA. WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO IMMORTALITY. By Hereward Carrington. Dodd, Mead & Co.

THE subject of death," says Dr. Carrington, "is as little studied as it is fascinating and all but insoluble. For, on its psychological side, it presents the great problems of immortality. . . . And on its physiological side it presents also phenomena of the greatest interest." The field is one wherein modern metaphysicians and psychologists have been but little busy, partly because of the scientific disposition to "let knowledge stop at the threshold of the unknowable," as a Chinese sage phrased it many centuries ago. This attitude is in sharp contrast to that of the long age preceding the dawn of science in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mediaeval man, from St. Augustine's day onward, was perhaps more concerned with death and the hereafter than with his own day, but modern man is generally too busy living to devote much speculation to the "beyond." Thus Dr. Carrington's study has the interest that attaches to the unusual.

In this treatise, which is an abridgment and remodeling of the larger book printed in England a decade ago by Dr. Carrington and the late J. R. Meader, the author approaches the subject first from the material, physiological side. Even here there are many unsettled puzzles. He goes over the ground rapidly, but lucidly, dealing with such problems as the exact moment of death, its causes, signs and attendant phenomena; trance, catalepsy, sleep, suspended animation, premature burial, old age and scientific theories as to the real nature of death. His general deduction tends to a postulate of continued existence, of some sort, after death. "Might not life," he asks, "be developed out of death?"

The second section of the book deals with the psychological aspects of the problem; various theories of immortality, theological and purely rational, concepts, and, especially, the scientific contributions of psychical research. This last has earned a rather bad name for itself, but, as Dr. Carrington argues, it is scarcely to be pool-poohed or uncritically thrust aside. He summarizes: "While, to many minds, the evidence . . . is insufficient to warrant a belief in the existence of 'spirits,' it is at least sufficiently strong to show us that here is a case for investigation; one, moreover, that presents great possibilities."

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